

Request for Proposals

***For
Early Intervention Quality Assurance and
Improvement***

through the

***Mississippi State Department of Health
First Steps—Early Intervention Program
For Infants & Toddlers***

**570 East Woodrow Wilson Drive — Osborne 205
Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1700**

Contact: Catherine Cliburn
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Invitation to Submit Proposals

The Mississippi State Department of Health will accept sealed written proposals until 5 p.m. on September 24, 2009 for the purpose of purchasing services consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C. The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), First Steps Early Intervention Program, will receive proposals from entities that have demonstrated knowledge of evidence-based practices for early intervention. For consideration, proposals for this activity must contain evidence of the entity's experience with special needs children from age birth to three. To receive a copy of the request for proposals or for more information, please contact Catherine Cliburn, First Steps Early Intervention Program, Mississippi State Department of Health, 570 E. Woodrow Wilson Drive, Osborne 205, Jackson, MS 39215 or by telephone at 1-800-541-3903 or (601) 576-7427. A copy of the Request for Proposals may also be viewed on the MSDH website at www.msdh.state.ms.us and the Governor's www.stimulus.ms.gov website.

1.0 Project Funding

Under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) is designated as the lead agency for Mississippi. The Early Intervention (EI) program serves infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth until their third birthday. Acting as the "lead agency" for the implementation of IDEA Part C, the MSDH, through First Steps, must assure that all infants and toddlers eligible under the above mentioned Act receive necessary and appropriate early intervention services to minimize the impact of any developmental disabilities affecting a child and to improve the likelihood of typical developmental outcomes for eligible infants and toddlers. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) appropriated funding for programs under Part B and C of IDEA. The IDEA funds under the ARRA provide an opportunity for the MSDH EI program to implement innovative strategies to improve early intervention services. ARRA funds are **one-time** funds made available as a unique opportunity to improve early intervention services for infants and toddlers birth to three with disabilities. The contract period will be for one year. Up to five grants will be awarded. The award amount will be less than \$200,000.00 per award.

2.0 Specifications, Terms, and Conditions

2.1 Requirements

Proposals will be received for each of the following five areas: Credentialing, Center of Excellence, Early Intervention University Coalition, Training for Child Care Providers, and Assistive Technology. Each submittal must indicate on the face thereof which of the following areas is referenced in the proposal. Any entity may submit proposals for as many of the areas as desired. In the case of proposals for more than one area, each area for which a proposal is being submitted will be considered separately. Contracts will be issued based on the best proposal for each individual area requested.

The MSDH, First Steps Early Intervention Program, reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. Contracts will be awarded based on thoroughness of the proposal, cost of the proposal, ability of the entity to demonstrate prior experience and capability, and any factor impacting the determination of the best proposal. Offerors may designate those portions of the proposal which contain trade secrets or other proprietary data which may remain confidential in accordance with Section 25-61-9 and 79-23-1 of the Mississippi Code. All training materials, DVDs or products developed with these funds will remain as property of the MSDH First Steps Early Intervention Program. Proposals will be accepted in the following five areas:

I. Credentialing

The MSDH, First Steps Early Intervention Program, seeks an organization with which to contract for the establishment and maintenance of an Early Intervention (EI) Credentialing office to support a system of credentialing and enrollment for approximately 185 EI providers, in compliance with IDEA. The proposal must include the following elements.

The selected Vendor will:

- ◆ Provide, receive, track, review, and approve credential/enrollment application material of Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and Special Instructors.
- ◆ Review coursework, establishing coursework requirements as necessary.
- ◆ Maintain a searchable database and determine applicant compliance related to the EI education requirement.
- ◆ Maintain a database of credentialed EI providers.
- ◆ Coordinate the background check process.
- ◆ Provide training and technical assistance regarding the EI credentialing and enrollment.
- ◆ Maintain a toll-free number.
- ◆ Develop and maintain a credential/enrollment web site.
- ◆ Participate in the Mississippi Interagency Coordinating Council workgroups.
- ◆ Coordinate new training opportunities for providers.

Training of EI providers will coordinate existing and new training opportunities, promote professional development and program improvement, and increase the use of technology to facilitate collaboration and professional development.

II. Center of Excellence

The MSDH First Steps Early Intervention Program seeks an organization with which to contract for development and implementation of a state-wide Early Intervention "Center of Excellence". This center will establish a model center for Mississippi, and other states by developing an efficient EI program, providing training on comprehensive multidisciplinary assessments, formulating Individual Family Service Plans, and delivering services in multiple ways for children from birth to three years of age. The proposal must include the following elements.

- ◆ Best Practice guidelines must be utilized and serve as the foundation of the design and provision of this proposal. Specifically, services must be family-centered and culturally responsible, promote children's participation in their natural environments, be comprehensive, coordinated, and team-based, and be based on the highest quality internal and external evidence that is available.
- ◆ This proposal shall include an onsite facility to house the Center of Excellence, test materials, distance learning and teaching ideas, such as video conferencing, and online training modules.
- ◆ A minimum of one training per quarter will be presented to EI providers in each of the nine health districts. For training purposes Public Health Districts I,II,

and IV will be grouped together; Districts III,V, and VI will be grouped together; and Districts VII, VIII, and IX will be grouped together . A minimum of 12 trainings will be offered in a calendar year either on-site or with other approved technology, i.e. an electronic seminar.

III. Early Intervention University Coalition

The MSDH First Steps Early Intervention Program seeks an organization to develop an Early Intervention University Coalition. Any university or college in Mississippi, having at least a Master's level program in the disciplines of Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech-language Pathology, Early Childhood Education, Special Education, Child Psychology, and /or Early Intervention, would be considered to be a part of a coalition. The proposal must include the following elements. The selected vendor will:

- ◆ Create collaborative faculty/administrative arrangements for interdepartmental, inter-campus, and/or interdisciplinary curriculums and courses.
- ◆ Partner with families as faculty in co-instruction of students.
- ◆ Establish community-based stakeholder teams including faculty, families, practitioners and administrators.
- ◆ Use innovative technologies for distance and active teaching and learning.

IV. Training for Child Care Providers

The MSDH First Steps Early Intervention Program seeks an organization to train child care providers including Early Head Start and state preschool programs to support children birth to three with a broad spectrum of special needs in the context of and as an integral part of a community approach. Strong interdisciplinary and interagency partnerships are required to ensure a continuous, effective approach to identifying and serving children in need of early intervention. The proposal must include the following elements.

- ◆ The proposal must document the inclusion of young children from birth to three with disabilities and other special needs in appropriate, typical child care and development, and other community settings with provision of necessary supports to help the child succeed in these environments.
- ◆ Programs must use evidence-based, best practice strategies and resources to help the child succeed in community participation/inclusion, including collaborative planning time, materials, equipment, and curriculum.

V. Assistive Technology

The proposal must include the following elements. The MSDH First Steps Early Intervention Program seeks an organization to set up Resource Centers in each of the nine Public Health Districts in the State to offer families/caregivers assistive

technology for children with developmental disabilities from birth to three. It would include a demonstration center and a lending library for toys or other items recommended based on the needs of the child. This proposal must include how coordination of services would involve all agencies who are funded to provide assistive technology to children in Mississippi from birth to age three.

3.0 Format and Procedures for Delivery of Proposal

3.1 Minimum Requirements

The proposal shall be in writing and shall consist of three parts: Part I - Program Proposal; Part II - Qualifications of principals and any subcontract staff and demonstrated ability and capacity to perform required activities; and Part III - Budget and budget narrative. All proposals should be submitted on letter size (8.5" X 11") paper with one inch margins. Responses to this request for proposals should not exceed 50 pages in length, excluding attachments. **Two copies of the proposal must be submitted.**

3.11 Program Proposal

This section shall provide a description of the offeror's proposal to provide services required by the RFP. The proposal must be prepared and organized in a clear and concise manner that is easily understandable. The proposal should address the tasks to be accomplished and processes to be undertaken to accomplish those tasks.

3.12 Qualifications

This section shall provide satisfactory evidence of the contractor's capability to manage and coordinate the types of activities and to provide the services described in this RFP in a timely manner; the name of the offeror, the location of the offeror's principal place of business and, if different, the place of performance of the proposed services. The discussion shall include a description of the offeror's background and relevant experience as related to the previously described activities and personnel expected to be directly involved in the project (curriculum vitae may be submitted as attachments for principal staff). The offeror's proposal must describe a plan for orientation and continuing education of staff consistent with 34 CFR 303.360, IDEA Part C.

3.13 Budget Narrative

To be considered, offeror's proposal must include documentation that addresses all costs for services and expenses. This should be included within the proposal as a budget and budget narrative. The proposal must identify a maximum cost for the project. Budgets proposed should run **November 1, 2009- October 31, 2010.**

3.2 Proposal Delivery

The receipt of sealed proposals will be recorded by MSDH First Steps program staff and opened as prescribed in the invitation to submit proposals. The parties submitting proposals are responsible for ensuring that the sealed competitive proposal is delivered by the required time and assume all risks of delivery. Faxed proposals will not be accepted. Proposals and modifications thereof received at the room designated in the RFP after the time set for receipt will not be considered. The proposal must be signed by a company official with authorization to bind the offeror to its provisions.

4.0 Renewal of Contracts

ARRA funds are one-time funds made available as a unique opportunity to improve early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. The contract will not exceed one year.

5.0 Compensation

Compensation for services will be in the form of a firm fixed price agreement.

6.0 Rejection of Proposals

Proposals which do not conform to the requirements set forth in this Invitation for Proposal may be rejected by the MSDH. Proposals may be rejected for reasons which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) The proposal contains unauthorized amendments to the requirements of the Request for Proposals.
- 2) The proposal is conditional.
- 3) The proposal is incomplete or contains irregularities which make the proposal indefinite or ambiguous.
- 4) The proposal is received late.
- 5) The proposal is not signed by an authorized representative of the party.
- 6) The proposal contains false or misleading statements or references.
- 7) The proposal does not offer to provide all services required by the Request for Proposals.
- 8) The proposal does not contain a budget and budget narrative/cost summary as described in section 3.13, Part III.

8.0 Acceptance of Proposals

The MSDH reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to waive minor irregularities in proposals. A minor irregularity is a variation of the Request for Proposals which does not affect the price of the proposal, or give one party an advantage or benefit not enjoyed by other parties, or adversely impact the interest of the Mississippi State Department of Health. Waivers, when granted, shall in

no way modify the Request for Proposals requirements or excuse the party from full compliance with the Request for Proposals specifications and other contract requirements if the party is awarded the contract.

9.0 Disposition of Proposals

All submitted proposals become the property of the State of Mississippi.

10.0 Competitive Negotiation

The method to be used is that of competitive negotiation from which the MSDH is seeking the best combination of price, experience, and quality of service. Discussions may be conducted with offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award. Likewise, the MSDH also reserves the right to accept any proposal as submitted for contract award, without substantive negotiation of offered terms, services or prices. Therefore, all parties are advised to propose their most favorable terms initially.

11.0 Request for Proposal Does Not Constitute Acceptance of Offer

This release of the Request for Proposal does not constitute an acceptance of any offer, nor does such release in any way obligate the MSDH to execute a contract with any other party. The MSDH reserves the right to accept, reject, or negotiate any or all offers on the basis of the evaluation criteria contained within this document. The final decision to execute a contract with any party rests solely with the Mississippi State Department of Health.

12.0 Exceptions and Deviations

Offerors taking exception to any part of the Request for Proposals shall indicate such exceptions on the proposal and fully describe the exception. Failure to indicate any exception will be interpreted as the offeror's intent to comply fully with the requirements as written. Conditional or qualified offerors, unless specifically allowed, shall be subject to rejection in whole or in part.

13.0 Nonconforming Terms and Conditions

A proposal that includes terms and conditions that do not conform to the terms and conditions in the Request for Proposals is subject to rejection as being non-responsive. The MSDH reserves the right to permit the offeror to withdraw nonconforming terms and conditions from its proposal prior to a determination by the MSDH of non-responsiveness based on the submission of nonconforming terms and conditions.

14.0 Proposal Acceptance Period

The original and one copy of the proposal and all attachments (two copies total) shall be signed by a company official authorized to bind the contractor to its provisions and submitted in a sealed envelope or package to Catherine Cliburn, First Steps-Early Intervention Program,

Mississippi State Department of Health, 570 East Woodrow Wilson, Osborne 205, Jackson, MS 39215 no later than 5 p.m. **September 24, 2009**. Timely submission of the proposal is the responsibility of the offeror. Offers received after the specified time shall be rejected and returned to the offeror unopened. The envelope or package shall be marked with the proposal opening date and time and the number of the request for proposal. The time and date of receipt shall be indicated on the envelope or package by the Early Intervention office. Faxed proposals will not be accepted.

15.0 Expenses Incurred in Preparing Offers

The MSDH accepts no responsibility for any expense incurred by the offeror in the preparation and presentation of an offer. Such expenses shall be borne exclusively by the offeror.

16.0 Proprietary Information

The offeror/proposer should mark any and all pages of the proposal considered to be proprietary information. Any pages not marked accordingly will be subject to review by the general public after award of the contract. Requests to review the proprietary information will be handled in accordance with applicable legal procedures.

17.0 Additional Information

Questions about the Request for Proposal document must be submitted in writing to Catherine Cliburn, First Steps-Early Intervention Program, Mississippi State Department of Health, 570 E. Woodrow Wilson Drive, Osborne 205, Jackson, MS 39215 -1700.

Offerors are cautioned that any statements made by the contact person that materially change any portion of the Request for Proposals shall not be relied upon unless subsequently ratified by a formal written amendment to the Request for Proposals.

18.0 Acknowledgment of Amendments

Offerors shall acknowledge receipt of any amendment to the solicitation by signing and returning the amendment with the proposal, by identifying the amendment number and date in the space provided for this purpose on the proposal form, or by letter. The acknowledgment must be received by the MSDH by the time and at the place specified for receipt of proposals.

19.0 Debarment

By submitting an offer, the offeror certifies that it is not currently debarred from submitting bids for contracts issued by any political subdivision or agency of the State of Mississippi and that it is not an agent of a person or entity that is currently debarred from submitting bids for contracts issued by any political subdivision or agency of the State of Mississippi.

20.0 Standard Terms and Conditions

Applicable Law

The contract shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Mississippi, excluding its conflicts of laws provisions, and any litigation with respect thereto shall be brought in the courts of the state. The contractor shall comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

Availability of Funds

It is expressly understood and agreed that the obligation of the State to proceed under this agreement is conditioned upon the appropriation of funds by the Mississippi State Legislature and the receipt of state and/or federal funds. If the funds anticipated for the continuing fulfillment of the agreement are, at any time, not forthcoming or insufficient, either through the failure of the federal government to provide funds or the State of Mississippi to appropriate funds or the discontinuance or material alteration of the program under which funds were provided or if funds are not otherwise available to the state, the state shall have the right upon ten (10) working days written notice to the contractor, to terminate this agreement without damage, penalty, cost or expenses to the state of any kind whatsoever. The effective date of termination shall be as specified in the notice of termination.

Procurement Regulations

The contract shall be governed by the applicable provisions of the Personal Service Contract Review Board Regulations, a copy of which is available at 301 North Lamar Street, Jackson, MS, for inspection.

Antitrust

By entering into a contract, the Contractor conveys, sells, assigns, and transfers to the MSDH all rights, titles, and interest it may now have or hereafter acquire under the antitrust laws of the United States and the State that relates to the particular goods or services purchased or acquired by the MSDH under said contract.

Approval

It is understood that the Contract is void and no payment shall be made in the event that the Personal Service Contract Review Board does not approve this contract.

Authority to contract

Contractor warrants (a) that it is a validly organized business with valid authority to enter into this agreement; (b) that it is qualified to do business and in good standing in the state of Mississippi; (c) that entry into and performance under this agreement is not restricted or prohibited by any loan, security, financing, contractual or other agreement of any kind, and (d) notwithstanding any other provision of this agreement to the contrary, that there are no existing legal proceedings or prospective legal proceedings, either voluntary or otherwise, which may adversely affect its ability to perform its obligations under this agreement.

Prospective Contractor's Representation Regarding Contingent Fees

The prospective contractor represents as a part of such contractor's bid or proposal that such contractor has/has not (circle applicable word or words) retained any person

or agency on a percentage, commission, or other contingent arrangement to secure this contract. **(This statement must appear in the proposal)**

Representation Regarding Contingent Fees

The Contractor represents that it has not retained a person to solicit or secure a State contract upon an agreement or understanding for a commission, percentage, brokerage, or contingent fee, except as disclosed in the Contractor's proposal.

Representation Regarding Gratuities

The offeror or Contractor represents that it has not violated, is not violating, and promises that it will not violate the prohibition against gratuities set forth in Section 7-204 (Gratuities) of the Mississippi Personal Service Contract Procurement Regulations.

Certification of Independent Price Determination

The bidder certifies that prices submitted in response to the solicitation have been arrived at independently and without - for the purposes of restricting competition - any consultation, communication, or agreement with any other bidder or competitor relating to those prices, the intention to submit a bid, or the methods or factors used to calculate the prices bid.

Contractor Personnel

The MSDH shall, throughout the life of the contract, have the right of reasonable rejection and approval of staff or subcontractors assigned to the work by the Contractor. If the MSDH reasonably rejects staff or subcontractors, the Contractor must provide replacement staff or subcontractors satisfactory to the MSDH in a timely manner and at no additional cost to the Mississippi State Department of Health. The day-to-day supervision and control of the Contractor's employees and subcontractors is the responsibility solely of the Contractor.

Failure to Enforce

Failure by the MSDH at any time to enforce the provisions of the contract shall not be construed as a waiver of any such provisions. Such failure to enforce shall not affect the validity of the contract or any part thereof or the right of the MSDH to enforce any provision at any time in accordance with its terms.

Oral Statements

No oral statements of any person shall modify or otherwise affect the terms, conditions, or specifications stated in this contract. All modifications to the contract must be made in writing by the Mississippi State Department of Health.

Right to Audit

The Contractor shall maintain such financial records and other records as may be prescribed by the MSDH or by applicable federal and state laws, rules, and regulations. The Contractor shall retain these records for a period of three (3) years after final payment, or until they are audited by the Mississippi State Department of Health, whichever event occurs first. These records shall be made available during the

term of the contract and the subsequent three-year period for examination, transcription, and audit by the Mississippi State Auditor's Office, its designees, or other authorized bodies. Copies of audits performed by independent auditors will be forwarded to the MSDH as they become available.

Right to Inspect Facility

The State may at reasonable times inspect the place of business of a contractor or any subcontractor which is related to the performance of any contract awarded by the State.

21.0 Evaluation Procedure and Factors to Be Considered In The Evaluation Process

21.1 Qualifications of Offeror

The offeror may be required before the award of any contract to show to the complete satisfaction of the MSDH that it has the necessary facilities, ability, and financial resources to provide the services specified therein in a satisfactory manner. The offeror may also be required to give a past history and references in order to satisfy the MSDH in regard to the offeror's qualifications. The MSDH may make reasonable investigations deemed necessary and proper to determine the ability of the offeror to perform the work, and the offeror shall furnish to the MSDH all information for this purpose that may be requested. The MSDH reserves the right to reject any offer if the evidence submitted by, or investigation of, the offeror fails to satisfy the MSDH that the offeror is properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the contract and to complete the work described therein. Evaluation of the offeror's qualifications shall include:

- 1) The ability, capacity, skill, financial, and other necessary resources to perform the work or provide the service required;
- 2) The ability of the offeror to perform the work or provide the service promptly or within the time specified, without delay or interference;
- 3) The character, integrity, reputation, judgment, experience, and efficiency of the offeror;
- 4) The quality of performance of previous contracts or services.

21.2 Steps in Evaluation

Step I

Proposals will be reviewed to assure compliance with the minimum specifications. Proposals that do not comply with the minimum specifications as stated in Section 2 will be rejected immediately, receiving no further consideration.

Step II

Proposals that satisfactorily complete Step I will be reviewed/ analyzed to determine if the proposal adequately meets the needs of the Mississippi State Department of Health. An evaluation committee will examine the proposals and score each proposal according to the criteria listed below:

30 Points - Program Proposal
30 points - Qualifications
40 points - Budget (cost)

Results of the evaluation and the recommendation of the evaluation team will be forwarded to the Office of Health Services director and to the MSDH contracts officer for review and concurrence. MSDH reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to negotiate with the best proposed offer to address issues other than those described in the proposal, to award a contract to other than the low offeror, or not to make any award if the evaluation committee determines that this is in the best interest of the MSDH.

Step III

The MSDH First Steps-Early Intervention Program director or designee will contact the offeror/proposer with the proposal that best meets the needs of the MSDH (based on factors evaluated in Step II) and attempt to negotiate an agreement that is deemed acceptable to both parties. The contract will be negotiated with the offeror who has the highest points, who has the most advantageous proposal to the MSDH, and who has the most comprehensive and responsive proposal as determined by the evaluation committee. A final draft of the contract will be forwarded to the Mississippi Personal Service Contract Review Board for approval if required.

22.0 All Proposals Submitted In Response To This Request Shall Be In Writing.

Appendix A— Map of Mississippi State Department of Health Public Health Districts

PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICTS

Northwest Public Health
District I

Northeast Public Health
District II

Delta/Hills Public Health
District III

Tombigbee Public Health
District IV

West Central Public Health
District V

East Central Public Health
District VI

Southwest Public Health
District VII

Southeast Public Health
District VIII

Coastal Plains Public Health
District IX



